United Nations E/AC.51/2015/L.4/Add.11

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
25 June 2015

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-fifth session
1-26 June 2015
Agenda item 7
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-fifth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation
(*Item 3 (b)*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 2 June 2015, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (E/AC.51/2015/4).

2. The Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS introduced the report. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Division responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. Appreciation was expressed for the report, in particular the positive overall assessment of the UNCTAD research and analysis pillar. Delegations welcomed the incorporation of a gender perspective into the evaluation and suggested that future OIOS evaluations highlight UNCTAD efforts to implement a systematic approach to the specific concerns of other vulnerable groups, such as children, indigenous populations and migrants.

4. A delegation observed that the OIOS evaluation did not reflect the entire range of work performed by UNCTAD as a world-leading entity in its area; the evaluation, while emphasizing the research and analysis pillar, did not assess the consensus-building and the technical cooperation pillars. Clarification was sought as to how

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UNCTAD products were being used by national stakeholders, such as government counterparts, as well as on their impact at the local level, especially given the existing budget constraints. Delegations noted that OIOS attempts to reach the main stakeholders of the other two pillars, in particular government representatives, were hampered, which was a significant challenge in its monitoring and evaluation efforts.

5. Delegations raised specific questions on the methodology of the report, including regarding the representativeness of independent external groups and thought leaders; the sampling method used to define the outputs to be analysed in the regression analysis and the rationale for that approach; the criteria used to select specific countries in which to carry out an in-depth analysis; the selection of intergovernmental meetings (specific to the United Nations or at the regional and subregional levels) and other events that OIOS observed during data collection; and access to the final product and follow-up to its recommendations. Clarification was sought as to how the analysis of OIOS had attempted to capture the efforts of UNCTAD to collaborate with other actors.

6. Delegations welcomed the receptiveness of UNCTAD to the report and its commitment to implementing all recommendations within a set time frame and noted the resource implications of that effort. They requested clarification on the anticipated next steps in that regard, including whether the action plan would be presented to the Trade and Development Board at its session to be held in September 2015. In addition, clarification was sought on the possible parallels between the OIOS evaluation and the recommendations contained in the 2012 report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the subject. Delegations noted that the recommendations should be translated to concrete actions in terms of technical assistance and capacity development initiatives.

7. Delegations more broadly asked how declining budgets might affect the ability of UNCTAD to fulfil its mandate, noting that research and analysis outputs were produced almost exclusively by staff employed under the regular budget. Delegations noted the heavy reliance on regular budget resources in this area and how it contrasted with the technical cooperation pillar, which relied largely on consultants funded from extrabudgetary resources. Concern over the increasing dependence on extrabudgetary funding for research and publications was raised. In that regard, one delegation raised the importance of joint cooperation efforts between UNCTAD and other leading organizations, such as regional development banks, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, and how such partnerships were reflected in the budget. Further clarification was sought regarding the reference in paragraph 7 of the report to "heavily consultancy-based interventions".

8. Clarification was sought on a number of specific aspects of the analysis and recommendations contained in the report. They included the existence of a dedicated evaluation office (such as that of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, for example) and whether the risk-based evaluation plan would be shared with the Trade and Development Board. Concern was raised over the possible consequences of the "sometimes contradictory messages" across UNCTAD publications and the variable degree to which gender was integrated into those publications. Delegations sought clarification on the practical remedial measures being implemented by UNCTAD in that regard. Other

delegations stressed that coherence concerns should not hamper UNCTAD efforts to propose innovative approaches and alternative economic and financial paradigms, especially if they respond to the needs of developing countries.

9. A delegation underlined that UNCTAD efforts to disseminate its products were hampered by the lack of a strong communications strategy. In order to address the recommendation contained in the evaluation in that regard, a suggestion was made to develop a stronger dissemination strategy to target all audiences and engage novel approaches, including social media. In addition, clarification was sought as to the remedial action being taken by UNCTAD to address the issues raised in paragraph 34 of the report, notably that staff surveyed still considered UNCTAD to be somewhat or highly inefficient at working across divisions in the production of outputs, for example with the sharing of databases.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 51 to 57 of the report of OIOS on the evaluation of UNCTAD.**

11. **The Committee welcomed the acceptance by UNCTAD of all of the recommendations in the OIOS report. The Committee stressed the importance of UNCTAD fully implementing the recommendations and providing Member States with regular updates on progress against its action plan for implementation, including at meetings of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board.**

12. **The Committee recalled that the main objective of UNCTAD was to assist developing countries, especially the least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition in integrating beneficially into the global economy in support of inclusive and sustainable growth and development.**

13. **The Committee recalled that the work of UNCTAD was based on three pillars, namely consensus building, research and analysis, and technical assistance, two of which, namely consensus building and technical assistance, had not been evaluated in the OIOS report. In this context, the Committee noted the importance of all three pillars and emphasized that the importance of technical assistance for the fulfilment of the UNCTAD mandate should not be undermined. In this regard, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to entrust OIOS with ensuring that the remaining pillars were addressed in the next evaluation report.**

14. **The Committee encouraged continued efforts by UNCTAD to integrate gender mainstreaming throughout its work.**

15. **The Committee noted that UNCTAD had reactivated its Publications Committee and stressed the importance of using the Publications Committee to move towards a more coherent approach to research and analysis. The Committee also noted that it was important that UNCTAD continue its efforts to reflect different approaches and alternative economic and financial paradigms in its products.**

16. **The Committee emphasized the need for more information on the regional and country-level impact of UNCTAD research and analysis products.**

17. **The Committee noted that a high percentage of staff surveyed for the OIOS report considered that UNCTAD needed to become more efficient at working across divisions in the production of its outputs. The Committee underlined the importance of improving working across divisions, noting that different divisions could have different economic perspectives.**

18. **The Committee recalled the Doha Mandate, which stated, inter alia, that, in strengthening UNCTAD, efforts should be made to enhance its efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability, including through effective results-based management and ensuring a member State-driven process through the intergovernmental machinery. The Committee noted that some progress had already been achieved in this regard and encouraged UNCTAD to continue its efforts to fulfil these objectives.**